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for

GFCI THAT CANNOT BE RESET UNTIL WIRED CORRECTLY ON LINE SIDE AND
POWER IS APPLIED

by

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Cross Reference to related applications

[0001] This application is a Continuation-In-Part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/434,101 filed on May 9, 2003 entitled "GFCI THAT CANNOT BE RESET UNTIL WIRED CORRECTLY ON LINE SIDE AND POWER IS APPLIED", the entire contents of which is incorporated herein by reference.

Field of the Invention:

[0002] The present invention generally relates to ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) devices. More particularly, the invention relates to a GFCI device that isolates the face terminals from the load side and prevents an initial miswiring of the GFCI from the load side.

Background of the Invention

[0003] GFCI devices are designed to trip in response to the detection of a ground fault condition at an AC load. Generally, the ground fault condition results when a person comes into contact with the line side of the AC load and an earth ground at the same time, which is a situation that can result in serious injury. The GFCI device detects this condition by using a sensing transformer to detect an imbalance between the currents flowing in the line and neutral conductors of the AC supply, as will occur when some of the current on the line side is being diverted to ground. When such an imbalance is detected, a solenoid activates a latched circuit breaker within the GFCI device to an open condition, thereby opening both sides of the AC line and removing all power from the load.

[0004] Some GFCIs include a lockout feature that prevents the GFCI from operating if the solenoid fails to operate. For example, in U.S. Patent No. 6,381,112 to DiSalvo, which is incorporated by reference herein, a GFCI is provided with a permanent lockout feature which prevents the GFCI from being reset if the solenoid fails to operate or if an open neutral condition exists. However, having a permanent lockout, which prevents the GFCI from operating, can be undesirable. For example, if a homeowner is entertaining guests in the kitchen, a power interrupt can occur requiring the GFCIs to be reset. If a GFCI connected to an appliance is locked out, the homeowner may have to use an extension cord to connect an appliance to a non-GFCI receptacle. In front of guests, this can prove to be embarrassing and inconvenient to the homeowner.

[0005] GFCIs can also include an LED to provide a trip indication as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,568,997, to Bienwald et al., the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference herein. This type of receptacle includes test and reset pushbuttons and a lamp or light-emitting diode (LED) which indicates that the circuit is operating normally. When a ground fault occurs in the protected circuit, or when the test button is depressed, the GFCI device trips and an internal circuit breaker opens both sides of the AC line. The tripping of the circuit breaker causes the reset button to pop out and the LED to be extinguished, providing a visual indication that a ground fault has occurred. In order to reset the GFCI device, the reset button is depressed in order to close and latch the circuit breaker, and this also causes the LED to illuminate once again. However, the GFCI disclosed in the Bienwald et al. patent does not provide an indication of a defective solenoid.

[0006] In addition to ground fault detection/protection, protection for the receptacle terminals of the GFCI is also needed. Specifically, the conventional GFCI device has a set of load terminals that are shared with the receptacle terminals leading to the face of the GFCI. Typically, the AC source is connected to the line terminals while the downstream load devices are connected to the load terminals. However, if the GFCI is miswired, this poses a problem. When the load terminals are connected to an AC source, the receptacle terminals are powered. The installer would be under the impression that the GFCI was operating correctly. However, the installer would be unaware that the GFCI is not providing ground fault protection even when a fault condition is detected. Thus, while tripping the latching mechanism in response to a miswiring condition, only the downstream devices are open. Devices plugged into the GFCI receptacle are still connected to AC power since the face terminals are directly connected to the line/load terminals.

[0007] It is therefore desirable to provide a latching mechanism that does not share the contacts between the receptacle terminals and the load terminals.

[0008] It is also desirable to provide a protection device that is not permanently disabled when the solenoid fails.

[0009] It is also desirable to provide a protection device that provides protection from miswiring, and permanently disables a miswiring prevention device once the protection device is correctly wired.

Summary of the Invention

[0010] The above and other objectives are substantially achieved by a system and method employing a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

[0011] According to an embodiment of the present invention, a method and apparatus for a protection device for indicating when ground fault protection is not being provided by the protection device is employed. The protection device includes source and load terminals between a conductive path and face terminals. The protection device further includes a latching mechanism, adapted to be operable between a first state in which the latching mechanism permits electrical contact between the source terminals and the load terminals and a second state in which the contact is broken; an alarm indicator, adapted to provide an indication that the protection device is not providing ground fault protection; and a fuse, adapted to blow when the latching mechanism fails to open during a manual test of the protection device.

Brief Description of Drawings:

[0012] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an example of a ground fault circuit interrupting (GFCI) device in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0013] FIG. 2 is another perspective view of the ground fault interrupting device shown in FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an example of the ground fault circuit interrupting device shown in FIG. 1 having an indicator in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0015] FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of the circuitry of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0016] FIGS. 5-7 are perspective views illustrating examples of positions of a locking plate of the ground fault circuit interrupting device shown in FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0017] FIGS. 8-10 are cross sectional views illustrating examples of positions of the locking plate, a latching plate and a reset pin of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0018] FIG. 11A is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of the circuitry of ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 3 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0019] FIG. 11B is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of a modification of the circuitry of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 11A in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0020] FIG. 11C is a schematic diagram illustrating another example of a modification of the circuitry of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 11A in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0021] FIG. 12 is a perspective view of an example of a ground fault circuit interrupting (GFCI) device in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention;

[0022] FIG. 13-16 are views illustrating examples of positions of a locking plate in the GFCI of FIG. 12 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0023] FIGS. 17A and 17B are cross sectional views illustrating examples of positions of a initial reset prevention arrangement that can be used with a GFCI in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

[0024] FIGS. 18A and 18B are cross sectional views illustrating examples of positions of a another initial reset prevention arrangement that can be used with a GFCI in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0025] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an example of a ground fault circuit interrupting (GFCI) device 10 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The GFCI device 10 comprises a housing 12 having a cover portion 14 and a rear portion 16. The GFCI also includes an inner housing 13 (See FIG. 5) when the cover portion 14 is removed from the rear portion 16. The cover portion 14 and rear portion are removably secured to each other via

fastening means such as clips, screws, brackets, tabs and the like. The cover portion includes plugin slots (also known as face receptacles) 18 and 20 and grounding slots 22. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that plugin slots 18 and 20 and grounding slots 22 can accommodate polarized, non-polarized, grounded or non-grounded blades of a male plug. The male plug can be a two wire or three wire plug without departing from the scope of the present invention. The GFCI receptacle 10 further includes mounting strap 24 having mounting holes 26 for mounting the GFCI receptacle 10 to a junction box (not shown). At the rear wall of the housing 12 is a grounding screw 28 for connecting a ground conductor (not shown).

[0026] A test button 30 extends through opening 32 in the cover portion 14 of the housing 12. The test button is used to activate a test operation, that tests the operation of the circuit interrupting portion disposed in the GFCI receptacle 10. The circuit interrupting portion, to be described in more detail below, is used to break electrical continuity in one or conductive paths between the line and load side of the GFCI receptacle 10. A reset button 34 extends through opening 36 in the cover portion 14 of the housing 12. The reset button 34 is used to activate a reset operation, which reestablishes electrical continuity in the open conductive paths.

[0027] Rear portion 16 has four screws, only two of which are shown in FIG. 1. Load terminal screw 38 is connected to a neutral conductor and an opposing load terminal screw 37 (See FIG. 2) is connected to the hot conductor. Line terminal screw 40 is connected to the neutral conductor and an opposing line terminal screw 39 (See FIG. 2) is connected to the hot conductor. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the GFCI receptacle 10 can also include apertures proximate the line and load terminal screws 37, 38, 39 and 40 to receive the bare end of conductors rather than connecting the bare end of the wires to the line and load terminal screws.

[0028] In an embodiment of the present invention rear portion 16 also contains an aperture 42 (See FIG. 2) for accessing the internal portion of the GFCI receptacle 10 for testing during the manufacturing process. Specifically, the aperture 42 provides access to a locking plate 58. The aperture 42 is sealed prior to shipping of the GFCI receptacle 10 to distributors.

[0029] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an example of a ground fault circuit interrupting (GFCI) device 11 having an indicator in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Specifically, GFCI device 11 is similar in operation to the GFCI 10 except GFCI device 11 has an alarm indicator 44 for providing an indication to a user that GFCI device 11 is

not providing ground fault protection, or in other words, GFCI device 11 is operating as a normal receptacle.

[0030] Alarm indicator 44 comprises a dual color lamp which provides a first color when a first filament is activated and a second color when a second filament is activated. In an embodiment of the present invention, the alarm indicator 44 illuminates to provide a green color when the GFCI receptacle 11 is operating normally and providing GFCI protection. In another embodiment of the present invention, the alarm indicator 44 illuminates to provide a flashing red color when the GFCI receptacle 11 is operating as a normal receptacle and not providing ground fault protection. It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that although the alarm indicator is described as being a dual filament lamp, two separate single filament lamps, a single lamp having a single filament, or a buzzer, or any other suitable indicator such as a colored lamp can be used to provide an alarm indication without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0031] FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of the circuitry of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In accordance with this embodiment, the GFCI device 10 is provided with a latching mechanism 46, sensing circuit 48, solenoid 50, solenoid plunger 52, latching plate 54 (See FIG. 8), reset pin 56 (See FIG. 8), locking plate 58, locking spring 60, secondary contacts 62, neutral conductor 64, hot conductor 66, a transformer arrangement 68 comprising sensing transformer 68A and ground transformer 68B, and a control circuit 70.

[0032] GFCI device 10 is structured and arranged to prevent an initial miswiring of the GFCI. That is, as described in more detail below, prior to shipping the device for use, the latching plate 58 is pressed downward to engage a projection on the back of plunger 52 and makes contact with secondary contacts 62 to thus close the secondary contacts 62. The reset button 30, when depressed, cannot engage with the latching plate 54 via the reset pin 56 and through aperture 55 (See FIGS. 8-10) in the latching plate 54. When the GFCI receptacle 10 is connected to the line side, the secondary contacts power the solenoid 50, causing solenoid plunger 52 to release locking plate 58 and position latching plate 54 so that the reset pin 56 can engage with the edge of the latching plate 54 forming the opening 55 when the reset button 34 is depressed.

[0033] FIGS. 5-7 are perspective views illustrating examples of positions of the locking plate 54 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In FIG. 5 the cover portion 14 of the housing 12 is removed to expose the internal housing 13 of the GFCI 10. The locking spring 60, secondary contacts 62, solenoid plunger 52 and solenoid 50 are shown. The locking spring 60 is in an extended or release position and is not exerting pressure.

[0034] In FIG. 6, the locking plate 58 is shown in a released or extended position. The locking spring 60 (See FIG. 5) holds the locking plate 58 up, thus preventing aperture 59 of the locking plate 58 from engaging with the projection 53 of the plunger 52 or from making contact with the secondary contacts 62 and closing the secondary contacts 62.

[0035] In FIG. 7, the locking plate 58 is shown as being in the down position and engaged with the projection 53 on the plunger 52 and, thus closing the secondary contacts 62. That is, an aperture 59 in the locking plate 58 interlocks with the projection 53 on the plunger 52 and holds the locking plate 58 in a position in which the locking plate 58 makes contact with and closes the secondary contacts 62. When the reset button 34 is depressed and the locking plate 58 is in a locked state, the reset pin 56 cannot engage with the latching plate 54 because the plunger 52 positions the latching plate 54 such that the reset pin 56 passes through opening 55 freely. The locking plate 58 will remain in this position until the GFCI receptacle 10 is powered from the line side. As can be appreciated from the schematic in FIG. 4, the load terminals 37 and 38 are electrically isolated from the remainder of the circuit when the latching mechanism 46 is in the open state as shown in FIG. 4. However, as is also shown, the secondary contacts 62, when closed by the locking plate 58, provide a path which enables the solenoid to be powered from the power source connected to the line terminals 39 and 40 and move the plunger 52 in the direction of "A", thereby removing the projection 53 of the plunger 52 from the aperture 59 and releasing the locking plate 58. Accordingly, the spring 60 raises the locking plate 58 upward and out of contact with secondary contacts 62, thus opening the secondary contacts 62.

[0036] FIGS. 8-10 are cross sectional views illustrating examples of positions of the locking plate 58, a latching plate 54 and a reset pin 56 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In FIG. 8, the locking plate 58 is shown as being engaged with the projection 53 of the plunger 52 via the aperture 59. The locking plate 58 makes contact with secondary contacts 62, thus closing them. Locking spring 60 is compressed and exerts pressure against the locking plate 58, but cannot move locking plate 58 upwards because locking plate 58 is held in place by

projection 53. In addition, latching plate 54 is positioned to prevent the reset pin 56 from engaging with the latching plate 54. That is, the latching plate 54 is positioned to allow the reset pin 56 to freely pass through the latching plate 54 when the reset button is depressed without engaging with the latch plate 54.

[0037] In FIG. 9, the GFCI receptacle 10 is powered from the line side. The secondary contacts 62 which are closed, power the solenoid 50, which drives the plunger 52 forward in the direction of "A". This releases the projection of the plunger 52 from the aperture 59, and also pushes the plunger 52 against the latching plate 54 to position the opening 53 slightly out of alignment with the reset pin 56. The locking spring 60 urges the locking plate 58 upward, thus forcing the locking plate into an extended or non-contacting position. The secondary contacts 62 open and remove power from the solenoid 50.

[0038] As shown in FIG. 10, the GFCI receptacle 10 is in a state of normal operation. That is, the locking plate 58 and locking spring 60 are in an extended position, the secondary contacts are open, and the reset pin 56 is able to engage with the edges of the latch plate 54 forming the aperture 53, thus allowing the upper shoulder 57 of the reset pin 56 to contact and thus engage with the underside of latching plate 54 when the reset button is depressed. Although not shown specifically, the spring 60 can thus urge the reset button upward along arrow "UP", thus drawing the latch plate 54 and latch block 63 upward. The latch block 63 thus closes the contacts of latching mechanism 46 to thus provide electrical connection between the line terminals 39 and 40, and their respective load terminals 37 and 38 and face terminals "hot face" and "neutral face".

[0039] Referring now to FIG. 1 and the operation of the GFCI receptacle 10 in a ground fault state. The GFCI receptacle 10 is disabled upon detection of a current imbalance. Specifically, the sensing circuit 48 selectively places the solenoid 50 in a ground fault state in response to an imbalance of current flow in the AC receptacle. While the solenoid 50 is shown here as being a solenoid, other devices such as piezoelectric components and micro electro-mechanical systems (MEMS) may be used. It can also be seen that the latching mechanism 46 is connected to the sensing circuit 48 and is placed in series with a plurality of conductive paths between opposing terminals of the receptacle. Specifically, the latching mechanism 46 breaks a plurality of conductive paths leading from side line terminals 39 and 40 to side load terminals 37 and 38 of the GFCI device 10 when the solenoid 16 is placed in the ground fault state.

[0040] The latching mechanism 46 is structured such that plugins 18 and 20, the face receptacles, are isolated from the line terminals 39 and 40 and the load terminals 37 and 38. Thus if the GFCI 10 is miswired and/or in a tripped position, plugins 18 and 20 will not be powered. A detailed description of the operation of latching mechanism 46 can be found in United States Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/378,647, referenced above. Latching mechanism 46 provides improved safety while maintaining a relatively low level of complexity with regard to conventional approaches.

[0041] It should be noted that the sensing circuit 48 effectively defines an imbalance of current flow as any difference in the amount of current flowing in the candidate paths that rises above a predetermined threshold.

[0042] To better demonstrate the operation of latching mechanism 46, the sensing circuit 48 will now be described in greater detail. Generally, it can be seen that the sensing circuit 48 has a transformer arrangement 68, a control circuit 70 and a test switch 30. The transformer arrangement 68 generates control signals in response to the imbalance of current flow, while the control circuit 70 is connected to the transformer arrangement 68 and selectively generates a switching signal based on the control signals. The test switch 30 is connected between the line terminal 40 and the load terminal 37 such that the test switch 30 enables manual generation of the imbalance of current flow.

[0043] Specifically, when the test switch 30 is closed (for example, manually, by an installer of the device), a circuit path is created from the load terminal 38 to the line terminal 40, which creates an imbalance that is detected by a first (or sense) transformer 68A. In an embodiment of the invention, the first transformer 68A detects imbalances in the net flux on the load side e.g. terminals 37 and 38 of the GFCI receptacle 10, and operates in conjunction with the control circuit 70 to energize the solenoid 50.

[0044] Detection of the imbalance condition by the first transformer 68A and the control circuit 70 causes activation of the solenoid 50 such that the latching mechanism 46 is open as shown in FIG. 1. It can be further be seen that a second (grounded neutral) transformer 68B is also provided to allow the transformer arrangement 68 to measure the change in net flux between the first conductive path 64 and the second conductive path 66.

[0045] It can be seen that the control circuit 70 preferably includes an amplifier and trip circuit 72, a full-wave bridge rectifier 74 and a silicon controlled rectifier (SCR) 76. The amplifier

and trip circuit 72 generate the switching signal, where the bridge rectifier 74 is connected to the line side terminals 39 and 40. It can be seen that the bridge rectifier 74 provides power to the amplifier and trip circuit 72 and that the SCR 76 selectively energizes the solenoid 50 based on the switching signal. The control circuit 70 preferably includes the components listed in the following table:

CAPACITOR C1	10 MIC OF AND , 16 VDC ALUM, ELECTROLYTIC
CAPACITOR C2	3.3 MIC, 16 VDC ALUM, ELECTROLYTIC
CAPACITOR C3	.01 MIC, 50VDC CERAMIC
CAPACITOR C4	.033 MIC, 25 VDC CERAMIC
CAPACITOR C5	.01 MIC, 500 VDC CERAMIC
CAPACITOR C6	.01 MIC, 50 VDC CERAMIC
CAPACITOR C7	470 PIC, 50VDC CERAMIC
DIODE D1	IN4004
DIODE D2	IN4004
DIODE D3	IN4004
DIODE D4	IN4004
DIODE D5	IN4004
RESISTOR R1	15K OHM, 1/4W CARBON FILM
RESISTOR R2	1.5 MED OHM, 1/4W METAL FILM
RESISTOR R3	24K OHM, 1/2W CARBON FILM
RESISTOR R4	200 OHM, 1/4W CARBON FILM
IC	RV4145

[0046] The state of the latching mechanism 46 as shown in FIG. 1 indicates that the solenoid 50 has entered the ground fault state, due to depression of the test button 30 or due to an actual ground fault. However, when the solenoid 50 is not in the ground fault state and the latching mechanism 46 has been properly reset so that latching mechanism 46 is closed a first and second path is created connecting the line terminals 39 and 40 to the load terminals 37 and 38 providing power to a load when the GFCI 10 is powered from the line side.

[0047] It is also important to note that when in the ground fault state, as shown in FIG. 1, an alternative current path is provided between the load terminal 37 and the line terminal 40. Thus, if the AC source is connected to the line side of GFCI receptacle 10 and the test switch 30 is closed, current flows from line side terminal 40, through resistor R1, to the load terminal 37. Thus, this current path will create an imbalance in the transformer arrangement 68 resulting in the latching mechanism 46 being open.

[0048] FIG. 11A is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 3 in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. The GFCI receptacle 11 is similar in operation to the GFCI device 10 discussed above except GFCI receptacle 11 includes an alarm indicator 44, a test switch 30 having primary contacts TS1 and secondary contacts TS2. A detailed description of the operation of the test switch can be found in United States Patent Application Serial No. 10/032,064, filed on December 31, 2001 entitled "Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) With A Secondary Switch Contact Protection", which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0049] When test switch 30 is pressed and closes primary test switch contacts TS1, an imbalance is created. The latching mechanism 46 opens and the alarm indicator 44 is extinguished and no longer provides a green colored illumination. Since the latching mechanism 46 is open, the subsequent closing of secondary test switch contacts TS2 by test switch 30 has no affect on GFCI 11.

[0050] In contrast, if the closing of primary test switch contacts TS1 fails to trip the latching mechanism 46, secondary test switch contact TS2 causes a short circuit blowing the fuse F10 and extinguishing the alarm indicator 44 providing green illumination. However, the alarm indicator 44 illuminates red. Diode DC10, resistor R11 and capacitor together act to flash alarm indicator 44. The flashing alarm indicator 44 indicates to a user that GFCI 11 is not providing ground fault protection and is only operating as an unprotected receptacle and not as a GFCI. Alarm indicator 44 will only flash red when the latching mechanism fails to trip. Thus, the alarm indicator can also serve to provide an indication of a defective solenoid 50, or any other component of the GFCI that aids in tripping the latching mechanism 46.

[0051] Embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 11B and 11C. Both FIGS. 11B and 11C apply to situations where a single LED is used.

[0052] FIG. 11B is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of a modification to the circuitry of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 11A in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Specifically, GFCI device 200 operates in substantially the following manner. If the GFCI device 200 is miswired from the load side, correctly wired from the line side and the latching mechanism 46 is open, or correctly wired from the line side and the latching mechanism 46 is closed, alarm indicator 244 is in an off state where no illumination is provided. Since conductive path 202 which comprises fuse F10 and conductor 207 offers less

resistance than conductive path 204 which comprises resistors R10, R11, capacitor C10, diodes D10, and alarm indicator 244, current passes through conductive path 202 rather than conductive path 204. Thus, alarm indicator 244 does not illuminate under normal conditions.

[0053] It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that although alarm indicator 244 in this example is a red LED, any color LED, e.g., green, yellow, orange, and the like can be used without departing from the scope of the present invention. Furthermore, an audible device can be used to indicate an alarm condition. Visual indication and audible indication can be used together or separately to practice an embodiment of the present invention.

[0054] In terms of test switch contacts TS1 and TS2, when test switch 30 is pressed and closes primary test switch contacts TS1, an imbalance is created. The latching mechanism 46 then opens. Since the latching mechanism 46 is open, the subsequent closing of secondary test switch contacts TS2 by test switch 30 has no effect on GFCI device 200.

[0055] However, if the closing of primary test switch contacts TS1 fails to trip the latching mechanism 46, secondary test switch contact TS2 causes a short circuit blowing the fuse F10, and creating an open in conductive path 202. Current now flows through conductive path 204, which energizes alarm indicator 244, which is preferably a red LED as discussed above. Diode DC10, resistor R11 and capacitor C10 together act to flash alarm indicator 244. The flashing alarm indicator 244 indicates to a user that GFCI device 200 is not providing ground fault protection and is only operating as an unprotected receptacle and not as a GFCI. Alarm indicator 244 will only flash red when the latching mechanism fails to trip. Thus, the alarm indicator can also serve to provide an indication of a defective solenoid 50, or any other component of the GFCI that aids in tripping the latching mechanism 46.

[0056] FIG. 11C is a schematic diagram illustrating another example of a modification of the circuitry of the ground fault circuit interrupting device of FIG. 11A in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Specifically, GFCI device 201 operates in substantially the following manner. If the GFCI device 201 is miswired from the load side or GFCI device 201 is correctly wired from the line side and the latching mechanism 46 is open, alarm indicator 246 will not illuminate since latching mechanism 46 is normally open and breaks any conductive path that provides current to illuminate alarm indicator 246. When GFCI device 201 is correctly wired

from the line side and the latching mechanism 46 is closed, alarm indicator 246 is in an on state where illumination is provided.

[0057] In terms of test switch contacts TS1 and TS2, when test switch 30 is pressed and closes primary test switch contacts TS1, an imbalance is created. The latching mechanism 46 opens and the alarm indicator 246 is extinguished and no longer provides a green colored illumination. Since the latching mechanism 46 is open, the subsequent closing of secondary test switch contacts TS2 by test switch 30 has no affect on GFCI 11.

[0058] On the other hand, if the closing of primary test switch contacts TS1 fails to trip the latching mechanism 46, secondary test switch contact TS2 causes a short circuit blowing the fuse F10, and creating an open in conductive path 206. This extinguishes alarm indicator 246, which provides an indication to a user that there is a problem with GFCI device 201.

[0059] It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art, that the present invention can be modified to have alarm indicator 246 flash rather than be extinguished without departing from the scope of the present invention. In addition, an audible alarm can be added to provide an indication that latching mechanism 46 failed to open under test. The audible alarm can be provided either with or without a visual indication in order to practice an embodiment of the present invention. Furthermore, alarm indicator 246 is not limited to any particular color. For example, LEDs or lamps that display white, yellow, blue, orange colors and the like can be used to practice embodiments of the present invention.

[0060] FIG. 12 is a perspective view of an example of a ground fault circuit interrupting (GFCI) device in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. The GFCI 115 does not contain isolated face terminals and performs ground fault detection in a manner known to those skilled in the art and will be discussed with reference to its novelty. The GFCI 115 includes latching plate 153 (See FIG. 13), secondary contacts 162 and a locking plate 157. Latching plate 153 is structured and arranged so that a portion of the latching plate passes through a plunger end 151 (See FIG. 13). The portion of the latching plate 153 passing through the plunger end 151 has a curved end. The curved end of the latching plate 153 allows the plunger end 151 to move the latching plate 153 laterally in the direction of "A" and "B". Proximate its center, latching plate 53 has an aperture 154 to allow reset pin 156 to engage with the latching plate 153 when the reset button 134 is depressed. In a reset prevention state, the

latching plate 153 is positioned such that the reset pin 156 freely passes through the latching plate 153.

[0061] Locking plate 157 is used to place the GFCI 115 in a reset prevention state. The locking plate can be a pin type device, which is inserted through the aperture 142 during the manufacturing process between the plunger 151 and the secondary contacts 162, thus closing the secondary contacts 162. When the GFCI 115 is powered from the load side, there is no power to the solenoid 150. Therefore, the GFCI 115 remains in a reset prevention state because upper shoulder 149 of the reset pin 156 cannot latch with the bottom surface of the latching plate 153 and reset the GFCI 115. When the GFCI 115 is powered from the line side, the solenoid is powered and moves the plunger in the direction of "B" slightly misaligning the aperture 154 in the latching plate 153 with the reset pin 156, thus allowing the upper shoulder 149 of reset pin 156 to contact the lower surface of latching plate 153, and thus pull latch plate 153 and latch block 159 upward to close the contacts of latching mechanism 178 in a manner similar to that discussed with regard to latch plate 54 and latch block 63. The locking plate 157 falls and opens the secondary contacts 162, removing power from the solenoid 150.

[0062] This embodiment of the invention will now be discussed with reference to FIG. 13-16 which are views illustrating examples of positions of a locking plate in the GFCI of FIG. 12 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In FIG 13, secondary contacts 162 are open and the locking plate 157 is being inserted into the GFCI 115 via the aperture 142.

[0063] In FIG. 14, the locking plate 157 comprising a pin type device is inserted between the plunger 151 and the secondary contacts 162, thus closing the secondary contacts 162 and allowing the secondary contacts 162 to power the solenoid 150 if the GFCI 115 is wired from the line side. The latching plate 153, however, is positioned to allow the reset pin 156 to freely pass through the aperture 154 and thus not engage with the latching plate 153 unless the GFCI 115 is connected to the line side in a manner similar to that discussed above with regard to FIGS. 4-10.

[0064] In FIG. 15, the GFCI 115 has been wired to the line side and the plunger 151 moves in the direction of "B" to release the locking plate 157. IN FIG. 16, the plunger 151 moves in the direction of "A" allowing an aperture in the latch plate 153 to be slightly misaligned with the reset pin 156 as shown in FIG. 16.

[0065] FIGS. 17A and 17B are cross sectional views illustrating examples of positions of an initial reset prevention arrangement that can be used with a GFCI in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. For conciseness, the details of the reset button, and reset pin are not repeated here. In FIG. 17, the locking plate 182 comprises a vertical member 182A connected to a horizontal member 182B proximate the center of the horizontal member 182B. A locking spring 180 is disposed between a portion of the inner housing 113 and an end of the horizontal member 182B. The locking spring 180 exerts force on the horizontal member 182B in the direction of "C". An opposing end of the horizontal member 182B makes contact with secondary contacts 178 in order to close the secondary contacts 178. The locking plate 182 is shown in a non-initial reset prevention state. That is, the plunger end 151 does not retain the vertical member 182A of the locking plate 182 in a position in which the horizontal member 182B closes the secondary contacts 178 by making contact with the secondary contacts 178.

[0066] Referring now to FIG. 17B, the plunger end 151 is shown retaining the vertical member 182A of the locking plate 182 which enables the horizontal member 182B to close the secondary contacts 178. The latch plate 153 is positioned so that the end of the reset pin (not shown) can freely pass through the opening 154 as discussed above, to prevent resetting. As also discussed above, the locking spring 180 is compressed by an end of the vertical member 182 which exerts force in the direction of "C". When the GFCI is powered from the line side, the secondary contacts 178 power the solenoid 150 which results in the plunger 151 moving in the direction of "A", thus releasing the locking plate 182. Substantially simultaneously, the spring 180 exerts force on the horizontal member 182B to propel the horizontal member 182B in the direction of "C" and open the secondary contacts 178.

[0067] FIGS. 18A and 18B are cross sectional views illustrating examples of positions of another initial reset prevention arrangement that can be used with a GFCI in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Referring to 18B, the solenoid 150 includes a plunger 184 having a vertical member 184A, a horizontal member 184B and an aperture 184C. The vertical member 184A is connected to the solenoid 150 and to a latching plate 186, which is similar to latching plate 153 discussed above. The horizontal member 184B is connected to the vertical member 184A. In an initial reset prevention state, the pin 191 of locking plate 190 is aligned with and passes through aperture 184C engages with the upper surface of horizontal member 184B, and thus closes the secondary contacts 192. In this position, an aperture 187 in the latching plate

186 is substantially aligned with a reset pin (not shown) to thus allow the reset pin to pass through the aperture 187. Thus, the reset pin cannot latch with the latching plate 186 and close the latching mechanism (not shown) to reset. The locking spring 188 is compressed and exerts force on the locking plate 190 in the direction of "C". However, the locking spring 188 cannot pull the locking plate 190 out of the aperture 184C unless the GFCI is powered from the line side.

[0068] Referring now to FIG. 18A, the GFCI has been wired to the line side. The secondary contacts 192 power the solenoid 150 moving the plunger 184 in the direction of "B". This movement releases the locking plate from aperture 184C. The locking spring 180 propels the locking plate 190 away from the aperture 184C and secondary contacts 192 to a position of rest as shown. The release of the locking plate 190 moves the latching plate 186 to slightly misalign the aperture 187 in the latching plate 186 with the reset pin. Thus, the reset pin can engage the latching plate 186 and reset the contacts to a closed state in a manner similar to that discussed above.

[0069] Those skilled in the art can now appreciate from the foregoing description that the broad teachings of the present invention can be implemented in a variety of forms. Therefore, while this invention can be described in connection with particular examples thereof, the true scope of the invention should not be so limited since other modifications will become apparent to the skilled practitioner upon a study of the drawings, specification and following claims.